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ABSTRACT

This report is a result of a conference in 1968 attended by secondary school educators to discuss challenging questions facing social studies teachers. Two interrelated areas of interest are explored: 1) The Nature of Contemporary Change in American Society and the World; and, 2) The Educational Needs of Our Students. However, in order to develop relevant curriculum and devise innovative teaching methods, teacher participation and changes in the schools are necessary. Participants felt that academic courses should reflect an interdisciplinary approach and team teaching which require advanced study and basic changes in teacher preparation. Content should help students understand man in society as both creator and product of environment adding three crucial special areas: 1) should emphasize analytical ability, inquiry approach, and decision making with less attention to factual indoctrination. The restrictive influence of the examination system is also noted. Changes in school structure and innovations for teacher training programs are described. The report concludes that active teacher involvement and leadership is vital to stimulating educational change. A brief appendix outlines a scheme for a K-12 curriculum sequence. (Author/JSB)

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# THE WINGSPREAD REPORT

on

# NEW DIMENSIONS in the TEACHING of the SOCIAL STUDIES

Issued by

The Ad Hoc Committee on the
Social Studies of the
National Association of Independent Schools

SP 000 935

In recent years teachers of the social studies have become keenly aware that we face a crisis in education and that the social studies lie at the very center of the storm. Many of us have been deeply concerned about this, but the pressures of daily work have made it difficult for us to think through fresh approaches and to seek out more appropriate teaching materials.

Under these circumstances the National Association of Independent Schools decided to call a meeting of social studies teachers as a first step in coming to grips with the crisis, defining it and seeking approaches to a solution. This was the origin of the Wingspread Conference, which was held at Racine, Wisconsin, in June 1968. About forty teachers came together at Wingspread, headquarters of the Johnson Foundation, for a week's discussions. This was a small working group but in some sense a representative one. Men and women came from all regions of the country; public as well as independent schools were represented.

These discussions produced a sharp and exciting collision of ideas; we did not reach agreement, certainly, upon some of the most crucial problems facing us. But this was not the important thing. The participants left Wingspread with a deeper sense of the dimensions of the educational challenge that lies before us and with a conviction that further and fuller debate about this is imperative. This debate can stimulate individual effort, thought, and experimentation. All of us stand to profit from this because it will help us to make progress in the task before us: to create, that is, new dimensions for the teaching of the social studies in the last third of this century.

The Wingspread discussions resulted in the preparation of a series of reports and in a short general statement entitled Preliminary Findings. These papers reported on the basic questions that we had begun to explore: the nature

of the contemporary educational crisis, the new needs of our students, "survival" as a relevant organizing theme in the teaching of the social studies, needed changes in the school curriculum, the examination system, the mode of inquiry, and the training of new teachers.

During the academic year 1968-69, these reports were submitted to secondary school teachers in many parts of the country for critical examination and further discussion. A working group then reconvened at Wingspread in June 1969 to take the criticisms and suggestions into account and, in the light of the year's debate, to rewrite the original Findings. Such is the origin of the report that follows.

This report has many imperfections. Its usefulness, in our view, will be measured by the degree to which it can help stimulate amongst all of us, as social studies teachers, further thought and debate concerning our goals and the changes that we ought now to try and initiate. This continuing dialogue, we would like to stress, is essential as a preliminary to further experimentation and innovation in our social studies teaching. We do not seek, at this time, mechanical agreement on the agonizing educational issues of our age. What we seek is a willingness to look for new directions and to make new mistakes as a contribution to the problems that face us all. This dialogue will, we hope, reflect our differences and the manifold variety of our thinking and our experience. It may also become the basis for new styles of work with students; and these, in turn, will be a contribution to our common thinking and the formulation of new policies.

## The Role of the Social Studies in the Schools

Over the years the task of high school social studies, in principle, has been to teach young people about the society in which they live. In actual

practice young people have learned only a portion of the truth. The traditional content of high school social studies has been "history" in a narrow political and chronological sense. Many teachers have inculcated loyalty to national flag and leadership with a strong emphasis on fact and rote memory through the medium of text and class recitation. This style of historical education became pronounced in the early years of the twentieth century when the schools began to speed the Americanization of millions of children, sons and daughters of immigrants, who flocked to the classrooms.

This particular tradition and style of teaching has died hard. It has become embalmed in the high school history texts which many of us still use. These modern texts, it is true, are more sophisticated than the older ones. They are gotten up quite attractively with colored maps, cartoons, photographs. But we doubt if the spirit and basic purpose of these books has undergone much change. Controversial topics are usually avoided; a critical approach is not lacking in some of the recent educational offerings, but it rarely makes an appearance in the texts which remain, for millions of children, the major element of their social studies reading.

This situation, as more and more of us are coming to realize, will not do any longer. Fresh and fundamental problems are thrust upon us today by a world in rapid change. The younger generation inherits a society beset with new and unprecedented issues. It is demanding that the social studies, and the teachers of the social studies, play a different role from that of the past.

What exactly is the role to be? Our schools, quite obviously are not the agents of the breathless social change that we see all around us, but they are, like everybody and everything else, caught up in the stream. Whether they like it or not, they must relate intelligently to the situation. Social studies

teachers must take a lead in finding fresh and invigorating ways to investigate the problems of society.

Is it presumptuous to set such a task for ourselves? We do not think so. Social scientists and historians are not magicians who, with a wave of the wand, can exorcize the frightful evils and dangers of the modern world. Our role is modest but still important. We come to the situation armed with knowledge. We can provide young people with the materials for the study of the world. We can help youth in their effort to grasp the human predicament more fully and more honestly than has hitherto been possible. We can help them prepare to confront and control the society which they inherit.

How, in a word, shall we rescue our classrooms from obsolescence and compel them to reflect the outside world, promoting a truer and more humane understanding of it? How shall we rescue our classrooms from their academic isolation and help them to become more a living part of the community which they are supposed to serve?

The Nature of Contemporary Change in American Society and the World

At Wingspread there was considerable debate concerning the nature and the extent of current social change. This controversy underscores a simple fact: as classroom teachers we cannot, at this time, dodge the imperative need to make our own estimates of the gravity and meaning of the manifold developments that we are witnessing in the world about us. There follow some of the suggested elements of the global problem that we discussed: we feel that these must be borne in mind in any realistic redesign of the dimensions of social studies teaching.

> The advanced countries, with the USA and the USSR in the lead, have achieved a capacity for mass destruction through both atomic and biological warfare that threatens the survival of

the human race itself. The pyramiding of expenditures on new weaponry intensifies the domestic crisis in the USA and also creates deepening international complications.

There is a gulf between rich and poor in the USA, dramatized by the ghetto rebellions and poor people's marches of recent years. The racial and class strife engendered by social and economic injustice threatens to tear this country into pieces.

Massive environmental intrusion, for which the mammoth American corporations and the Government itself bear major responsibility, threatens the destruction of our natural environment, the exhaustion of our natural resources, the progressive poisoning of food, water, earth, and air.

Population expansion, both here and abroad, is out of control. It threatens, at the present rate of escalation, sure catastrophe in the twenty-first century.

Many components of this complex situation lie wholly or partly within the domain of the social sciences. Hitherto we, as teachers, have reacted too slowly to these problems about which our students are so deeply, so painfully aware. Traditional practices and approaches are no longer adequate to deal with questions as these.

The Educational Needs of Our Students

To participate effectively in society, we felt that students need to understand the nature of man and the dynamics of social change. In this context we discussed at Wingspread the concept of survival as an organizing theme for the study of human society. We explored this concept not in any narrow and mechanical sense but in terms of man's age-old struggle to master his environment and to bend it to the needs of his own continuing existence. The meaning of man's life, we thought, has centered around an unremitting struggle for food, shelter and survival in the face of a hostile world.

To aid him in this struggle, man has fashioned a complex array of cultural weapons -- social, political, and military organization, tools, forms of

aesthetic and religious expression, ideological and mythological systems. It was suggested that all societies that have existed on the globe provide models, when analyzed in a careful, scientific, and many-sided way, of man's essential nature and his essential struggle. Such models, if selected from the full range of history, will provide the student, by means of cumulative study over a period of years, with a picture of the world and its peoples. They will also provide essential information about man and the basic determinants of life and of the social order.

Our students' survival on this planet may well depend on the degree of their commitment to rational action on behalf of the welfare of other people; and they must learn, too, to cope with the world emotionally as well as intellectually. Commitment and the need for social action will make it imperative that students learn to implement their decisions through the arts of advocacy, agitation, mediation and reconciliation.

Changes Required in Our Schools

Social studies teachers who wish to help their students fulfill these needs must face the necessity of change in a number of areas:

1. Changes required in academic courses

Many social science disciplines - psychology, anthropology, geography, sociology, etc. -- have much to contribute to a realistic and many-sided approach to the study of man and society. Ideology and aesthetics deal with man's imaginative creations in the realms of art, music, literature, and ideas. The study of man's spiritual life helps us to understand his nature and his social behavior.

There are difficulties, of course, in suggesting that teachers take steps to achieve the mastery of the several disciplines that such an approach seems

to require. But this in itself is one of the dimensions of the problem that we are called upon to meet and solve. Possible solutions are team-teaching, a higher priority to the demand for leaves for advance study, and basic changes in teacher preparation and education.

Some readers will object that the approach here called for will mean an end to history teaching in the traditional sense; and strong objections have been raised that we are calling for the abandonment of historical chronology. But most of us have been trained as historians; we believe that a strong chronological sense is an aid to the study of the historic sequence. We do not wish to throw out chronology, but we do wish to broaden the sequence by including relevant material drawn from a great variety of social science disciplines.

Existing courses should be made to justify their existence in terms of their contribution to a student's understanding of man in society as simultaneously the creator and the product of his environment. Literary structure, for example, is only one limited aspect of the study of a Shakespearean play; it should be treated in addition as a human and historical document, focusing upon the society that produced it and which it so brilliantly illuminates. The study of fifth century Greece should go beyond the brute facts, e.g., of the Peloponnesian War, to show the impact of geography or population pressure upon Athenian institutions and ideas. A unit of the New Deal should not primarily be concerned with "alphabet soup" and the names and functions of new governmental agencies; it should study the alternatives available to the Roosevelt Administration and the way in which it made decisions. Such a unit might even ignore politics completely and make its major thrust a study of the far-reaching ecological experiment of the Tennessee Valley Administration.

This approach is not only multi-disciplined; it requires also that we experiment with interdisciplinary methods of team-teaching. In saying this, we are aware, of course, not only of the challenge but also of the formidable difficulties. This, again, is no reason for shying away from such an approach. A course, for example, in Afro-American culture would need to be designed by a group of teachers, including a historian, a musician, a sociologist, and a literary critic. Other examples of microcosms of behavior suited to this multi-discipline, team-taught approach would be the process of urbanization or social revolution, the culture of the ancient Hebrews, the Mexican village, an Indian tribe. Student interests and staff resources should determine which, out of a multitude of available models, are chosen for study.

There are, then, many avenues toward a deepened study of man and his social behavior. But we felt that there are also certain aspects of our contemporary experience so crucial that they cannot be omitted from the design of any modern school curriculum.

(a) The international order. Wingspread was preoccupied with the question of violence and the use of organized violence by the nation-state as an instrument of war in the pursuit of national policy. The conference was strongly of the opinion that we need drastically to modify the traditional approach to the study of war and international violence. The atomic age and the grim possibility of atomic annihilation creates here a totally new dimension, a totally new urgency, for the study of war and the means for its elimination. Topics, to give examples, that might be included in a study of the international order, might be: nuclear power and the arms race, disarmament, Third World struggles, the population crisis, the Soviet bloc, Marxist philosophy, coexistence.

(b) Black studies. Black studies have up until now played a dual role in our society. They have provided Black people with a fuller sense of ethnic identity and dignity which will serve them in good stead in their continuing struggle for equal rights; and Black studies have, to some degree, sensitized the white community to the meaning and the agony of the Black experience. But the full impact of all this upon the teaching and writing of

American history has yet to be felt.

But, as the Wingspread group pointed out, the Black experience is more than just an important aspect of American life: it is in fact central to understanding American history at all. For this reason, we suggested, Black studies are not needed merely or especially for Blacks. They are needed for everyone, and above all for whites. Without such studies, it will be hard to convince our students why the goal of racial equality must be given top priority in our society, if it is to survive.

(c) The Balance of Nature. Ecology, Wingspread pointed out, is a science that views man as part of the natural environment, and as a victim of it if he upsets or destroys the delicate balance of nature. We felt that it was mandatory for teachers of the social studies to set up new courses to explore the contemporary ecological crisis and possible ways of resolving it.

2. Changes in classroom procedures

In the classroom we face the need for changes in our approach to the method of inquiry. We must teach a method of rational investigation in the face of real and critical problems, rather than resort to factual indoctrination or lectures about the dead past. It is necessary to raise questions and to raise even more questions than we can answer. Analytical ability must become the keystone of the learning process, not rote. Team-teaching is needed, if for no other reason than to help students explore all facets of a complex reality and to avoid exposing them merely to a one-sided view of it.

In experimenting along these lines, we will be aided by the young people themselves -- their openness to new and imaginative approaches, their willingness to tackle problems in fresh and untried ways. Students will bring enthusiasm to new ways of organizing and communicating knowledge: Socratic dialogue, role playing, debate, musical and dramatic forms of expression. Students thus will teach each other, as well as being taught by adults. More time will be devoted to inquiry, analysis, and decision, less to the

acquisition of facts.

In reaching these conclusions, we were obliged to tackle an obstacle that, in our opinion, paralyzes both student and teacher creativity at the very roots: the examination system. Grading and tests, the difficulties these present in the way of innovation in the social studies, occupied a good deal of our time at Wingspread.

On the one hand, we had no desire to underestimate or play down the important role which the testing system plays in the educational process. Examinations fulfill an important social function, at one level, in determining who is to go to college and to receive the higher education which will qualify them to fill skilled and leadership positions in the socio-economic system. We did not underestimate, in general, the immense significance and utility of the whole examination and grading system in filling the pragmatic needs of American life.

Current testing practices, on the other hand, it was pointed out, have a profound and immeasurable impact upon the philosophy, the processes and the objectives of teaching the social studies, not only in the ordinary high schools but particularly in schools concerned with college preparation. Our conference was deeply concerned about the restrictive influence of these tests upon curriculum innovation, and their stifling of the method of open, free inquiry. If knowledge is process, and science does <u>not</u> give us absolute or final truth, then the principal value of education lies in inductive and deductive methods of instruction which cannot be measured by the simplistic answers to the test models or by the conventional quiz.

It is clear that new ways of evaluating student development will have to be looked for: we, together with our students, will have to find them.

Ideally, students should examine rather than be examined. The "test" that we should be seeking ought to be the fruit of this process of examination; it may be a creation of the group itself, like a piece of sculpture or a folk opera. It may even be an oration, delivered on a street corner, to "scorning men."

The elaboration of such fresh, warmer, more creative types of expression as ways to assess student growth, presents a new challenge to us as teachers: it defines yet one more critical element in the dimensions of the "new" social studies.

3. Changes required in school structure

Many of the educational needs that we have tried to identify can be satisfied only partially in the traditional classroom. We, together with our schools, are called upon, therefore, to provide and to encourage dimensions of learning that go beyond the four walls of the classroom and even beyond the walls of the school.

Here we are not talking about the "enrichment" of the student's life by activities such as visits to museums, surveys of community attitudes, visits to Washington, etc., important and exhilarating as such events may be. We are talking about the kind of leadership that the classroom teacher can give his students as active, participating members of their community, of the community in which the school is physically located. It was pointed out, at Wingspread, that there can be no disciplined study of the social sciences without personal commitment. This means commitment to the lives and welfare of other human beings. Such commitment provides a central motive for academic study and illuminates for young people the reason to undergo the discipline and the effort that this entails.

We are talking, in other words, about the clinical aspect of the classroom as a theoretical guide and aid for young people who wish to become involved in community life and welfare. We are saying that today students and teachers need to be inside and outside the classroom at the same time. Outside, in the sense that they are examining and confronting a real social problem, such as pollution, urban blight, the medical needs of the aged; inside, to the extent that theory and study are required to delineate the problem and to make a reasoned analysis of it that will, in turn, provide a guide to further action.

There are countless possibilities for student involvement of the type that we have in mind:

(a) The school itself is a model of human society and can provide actual experience in the dynamic of community relationships. Here is a world where students can interact with each other, reach decisions and carry them out. Difficult though this will seem to some, it means that students should be involved in every level of school life, including the actual administration of the institution. Students should also have a voice, perhaps an influential one, in deciding what is to be taught and when. In some schools, even, students are already taking part in the process of interviewing and selecting prospective teachers. Perhaps it goes without saying that the students should be encouraged to send representatives to school governing boards and to hold elections for this purpose. They must be listened to seriously and with respect, and must be encouraged to wield power now if they are to seek it and to exercise it responsibly after they graduate. Perhaps censorship of school newspapers, should be completely lifted. How else, except by the <u>total</u> exercise of the right of free speech, will students learn the meaning of the <u>responsible</u> exercise of this right? And where better can they learn these skills if not in their school experience?

(b) The social studies teacher and the school need to recognize that off-campus experiences complement on-campus experiences. In identifying and facilitating such experiences the teacher has an obligation to consult with his students and be guided by their interests.

(c) Social studies teachers need to convince their insti-

tutions of the key role that continuity plays in the development of social studies education. The scope and sequence of the social studies should be planned K-12. Various ways that this can be done are listed in the Appendix below. It follows at once that there is a practical necessity for secondary school teachers to establish relations, on many levels, with their elementary school colleagues. At the very least they should get to know them and talk with them. It is particularly helpful if an exchange of teachers can be organized -- elementary school teachers teaching in the high school and vice-versa. Also, if older students can be involved in teaching the younger ones and helping them work out projects in art, science, anthropology, etc.

(d) We must try to introduce a new psychological atmosphere into the classroom and into the school. It is the set opinion of countless students that (to quote one) "school is designed as a hateful, depressing experience." To get things done and done well, the experience must be accompanied by joy. People, to take one example, may have children for many reasons; but one important reason is that the process (at least in the initial stages) is a delightful one. And the same principle can be applied to learning. George Leonard, in a recent book EDUCATION AND ECSTASY, makes this point well. If the learning process cannot be something for students to delight in, then we had better forget the whole thing.

4. Changes required in teachers and their training

Wingspread explored carefully the question of the kind of training and retraining that teachers should have if they are to be truly effective in carrying forward the increasingly complex tasks of high school social studies education; and if they are to have competence not only in teaching but also in experimenting and innovating. Some participants pointed out that our program envisions and logically requires a revolution in teacher training.

Today, said they, teacher training is a Cinderella relegated to the edge of campus life. But if what they say is true, then the universities and the schools need to regard teacher training in a totally new way. Perhaps the training of the teacher, both present and prospective, needs to be seen as the central function of a modern university and not a peripheral one. Many

university disciplines -- in the biological and physical sciences, in linguistics, law, anthropology, archaeology, architecture, sociology, political science, and the humanities -- need to cooperate in the intellectual preparation of the future teacher in a period of years that stretches over both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The universities, we believe, need to regard this task as akin in importance to pure research and far transcending it in social significance.

That appropriate qualities be developed in present and prospective teachers, we make the following recommendations:

> The undergraduate education of the teacher should include study in depth of one discipline and as much breadth as possible in the study of the humanities, the social and natural sciences. In order that the prospective teacher may be encouraged to develop a sense of the unity of knowledge a sine qua non of this approach, if it is not to degenerate into a futile pragmatism, is a thorough grounding in philosophy.
>
> Every teacher should spend at least a year as an intern prior to being given responsibility for the conduct of a class. When a beginning teacher has not had such experience, the school should provide it by means of formal arrangement with more experienced teachers. Teachers, wherever possible, should come into the classroom having had significant non-academic experience in (e.g.) government, business, the military, the student movement, etc.
>
> Throughout the teacher's career, the right should be assured him to returning to the university to refresh his knowledge by taking additional courses in areas that seem appropriate to him. To facilitate the provision of courses that are relevant to such educational needs, college teachers should be encouraged to maintain close relationships with their neighborhood secondary schools; the schools, wherever possible, should take pains to involve college people in the team-teaching approach that we have discussed above.
>
> School administrations should try to create a climate in which continued learning is part of the teacher's life. It should be expected and accepted that a social studies teacher will find himself in the very thick of community

activities, even the controversial ones. Resources must be found to make possible a realistic program of sabbatical leaves, teacher travel, and the attendance of inter-school meetings.

## Conclusion

What is so new about all this? Some critics have objected that "Wingspread thought" is years behind the thinking of the most advanced schools. Other critics, attacking from the opposite flank, denounce the Wingspread perspectives as being far too radical, unrealistic, and visionary.

The perspectives and the ideas of this report are not new. We make no claim for them that they are original or definitive. What is new in the situation is that we, the teachers, are beginning to find our <u>own</u> voice, are starting to find our <u>own</u> perspectives arising out of our <u>own</u> experience with young people. A decisive factor in the creation of "new dimensions in the teaching of the social studies," hitherto missing, is the active and independent participation of the secondary school teachers themselves. Reacting simultaneously to the problem and to our students, we are now beginning to give the leadership that is to be expected of us. If this report serves even in a small way to stimulate in the community of teachers, thought and debate about where we wish to go and how we wish to get there, it will not have been written in vain.

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Ad Hoc Committee on Social Studies of NAIS

## Appendix

## The Sequence of the Curriculum

All the grades, K-12, must be considered in the design of a social studies curriculum. There are many different ways to delineate and link the steps. A few organizing schemes, which may be useful as a basis for discussion, follow:

A. The intensive examination of successive societal models, chosen chronologically from ancient through modern history. This appraoch could be labeled "post-holing the history of civilization."

B. Comparative Studies: the examination of two or more societies or eras, using a variety of disciplines to present the total environment and focusing (for example) upon:

> The contrasting responses of groups developing in similar or dissimilar environments.
>
> Contrasting dimensions of leadership roles in different societies.
>
> Comparison of social, political, and economic institutional systems.
>
> Responses to the process of industrialization: comparisons, e.g., of Japan, the U.S., France,and the U. S. S. R.

C. Sequences related by skills:

a. Elementary: manual skills
Middle grades: manual and verbal
Upper grades: analytical

b. Sequences which spiral in generality and in terms of concept formation, inductive development of generalization, application of principles. See Hilda Taba, Teachers Handbook for Elementary Social Studies, introductory edition, 3-22.

D. Sequences organized by content for different grade groups:

i.e. Models of Society. Local for elementary grades, national for middle grades, international for upper grades.